

6650  
NIT-84

United States Patent Application

Title

A DELIVERY MANAGING SYSTEM

Inventor

Gunji TSUKUDA.

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SPECIFICATION

TITLE OF THE INVENTION

A DELIVERY MANAGING SYSTEM

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION:

5 FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a system for supporting delivery of purchased goods or commodities from a distribution center to a purchaser when <sup>purchased</sup> ~~she/he bought it~~ through ~~such as~~ an on-line shopping service and/or a mail order system. <sup>or the like</sup>

DESCRIPTION OF PRIOR ART

With <sup>the widespread use</sup> ~~widely spreading~~ of an on-line shopping service through <sup>the</sup> ~~such an~~ Internet <sup>etc.</sup> ~~and so on~~, demand for delivery services is expected to increase more than ever before. On the other hand, because of increase in <sup>the</sup> average age of marriage, as well as in the number of families <sup>which</sup> ~~whose~~ both parents <sup>work at</sup> ~~go out for~~ jobs, <sup>the</sup> ~~such~~ possibility has been increased that the purchaser is absent from home when the delivery service visits at her/his <sup>house is increased. This</sup> ~~house~~. And, it causes a problem that the distributor must deliver it again, thereby increasing the cost of delivery service. Also, it causes another problem for the purchaser that she/he cannot easily or quickly receive the commodities or goods that she/he bought. Therefore, for both the distributor and the purchasers, it is very important object to realize and to

establish a smooth delivery system of the purchased commodities or goods, at the present as well as in the future.

B For <sup>resolving</sup> ~~dissolving~~ such problems, there was already known a technology with which the delivery of the commodities or goods can be done even in an instance of absence of family members at home. For example, in accordance with a conventional technology, a delivery box is provided for each family at the entrance of the house thereof, and only the distributor is informed of an identification number or code of the delivery box thereby prohibiting or protecting the box from being opened by the persons other than the distributor so as to maintain the security thereof (Japanese Patent Laying-Open No. Hei 02-1051572). Or, there was also known a technique in which, in a common place of a condominium is provided a delivery locker for common use, in which a plurality boxes are provided, thereby enabling the delivery of commodities or goods to be delivered for each room of the condominium (Japanese Patent Laying-Open No. Hei 06-270992). However, hereinafter, a block for storing or receiving a single commodities or goods therein is called "a box", and a structure having one or more of such boxes is called "a delivery locker" as a whole.

As an another means for dissolving the problem mentioned above, there was also known a method, in which the distributor automatically registers data about date and

time when the resident of address to be delivered wishes to receive the goods into a data base thereof through push buttons when receiving an information through a telephone from the resident on the desired date and time for delivery service. And, using this data, the chance of delivering to the residence in absence can be reduced (Japanese Patent Laying-Open No. Hei 05-165847). In accordance with this method, it is further described that the tendency of the resident(s) to stay at home on day and time can be detected by storing the data about date and time when the resident(s) of that address wishes to receive, therefore, even if there is no information from the receiver or addressee in a certain case of delivery of the goods, the chances of delivering at the residence in absence can be reduced by using that tendency.

#### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

As is apparent from the above, it is possible to achieve home deliver service of commodities or goods even in absence of the purchaser by using the delivery box of the conventional technology. However, it is still difficult to provide such <sup>a</sup> the delivery box in front of every house and such the common delivery locker in the common place for every condominium, from a view point of spaces.

Further, if being provided such the common delivery locker in the common place of the condominium, there is still

a problem in the conventional technology mentioned above,  
i.e., of forgetting to receive the delivered commodities.  
For the distributor side, since it is impossible to check  
whether the delivered commodities which is received in the  
5 delivery box is taken out therefrom or not, it is also  
impossible to make a confirmation of receipt by the resident  
of the addressee. In other words, it is still impossible  
to follow up the receipt by the resident of the address of  
the delivery goods.

10 Further, in the method for reducing the chance of  
delivery to the absent residence by using the information  
of desired date and time for the delivery service in  
accordance with the conventional art, it is necessary for  
the resident of the address to know that there is commodities  
15 or goods to be delivered to her/him. For this reason, the  
distributor must previously <sup>notify</sup> ~~notifies~~ the resident of the  
address that there <sup>are commodities</sup> ~~is the commodities~~ or goods to be delivered  
to her/him, by using such as a telephone call or a card for  
absentee. This also comes to be a considerable burden for  
20 the distributor. Further, the tendency detected from the  
stored data of the desired date and time for delivery can  
only indicate that the resident stays at home accidentally  
on a certain date and time of a day of a week, only up to  
that time. Therefore, even in the case that it is delivered  
25 on the detected date and time of high possibility for the

resident to stay at home, the possibility of absence is still high, and there is still remained a lot of possibility that the purchased commodities could be delivered earlier than that detected date and time.

5           Thereby, an object of the present invention is, for  
B           <sup>overcoming</sup>  
1           ~~dissolving~~ the problems in the prior art mentioned above,  
to provide a smooth delivery system from the distributor  
to the purchaser of the commodities or goods which is  
purchased through the on-line shopping service and so on.

10           For accomplishing the object mentioned above, in  
accordance with the present invention, there is provided  
means for determining scheduled date and time for delivery  
of the purchased commodities or goods, from a schedule  
information of a delivery information of each area of the  
15 distributor and a schedule information of the purchaser.

Further, there is provided means for determining that  
the delivery of the commodities or goods is to be conducted  
through an agent, on a basis of an information of a standard  
for using an agency, in relation with the commodities or  
20 goods to be delivered.

Further, in case that the commodities or goods is  
decided to be delivered from the distributor to the purchaser  
through an agency, there is provided means for detecting  
the commodities or goods that has been kept in the agent  
25 in long time.

Brief Description of the Drawings:

Fig. 1 shows a functional construction diagram of a delivery managing system in accordance with a first embodiment of the present invention;

5 Fig. 2 shows a hardware construction of each server of the above delivery managing system;

Fig. 3 shows an example of a delivery information used in the above delivery managing system;

Fig. 4 shows an example of a delivery goods information  
10 used in the above delivery managing system;

Fig. 5 shows a detailed processing flow of a step of noticing of a list of available date for delivery in the above delivery managing system;

Fig. 6 shows an example of a schedule information used  
15 in the above delivery managing system;

Fig. 7 shows an example of a purchased goods information used in the above delivery managing system;

Fig. 8 shows a detailed processing flow of a step of registering a scheduled date for delivery in the above  
20 delivery managing system;

Fig. 9 shows an example of a commissioned goods information used in the above delivery managing system;

Fig. 10 shows a detailed processing flow of a step of  
an arrival  
a store-in of an agent server in the above delivery managing  
25 system;

B Fig. 11 shows detailed processing flow of a step of  
a <sup>departure</sup> ~~store-out~~ of the agent server in the above delivery  
managing system;

Fig. 12 shows a functional construction diagram of  
5 a delivery managing system in accordance with a second  
embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 13 shows a hardware construction of an agent  
server of the delivery managing system shown in Fig. 12;

Fig. 14 shows an example of the delivery goods  
10 information used in the second embodiment mentioned above;

Fig. 15 shows an example of a locker information used  
in the second embodiment mentioned above;

Fig. 16 shows a detailed processing flow of a step the  
<sup>arrival</sup> ~~store-in~~ of the agent server;

B 15 Fig. 17 shows an example of an information list of  
distributors in the delivery managing system of the second  
embodiment;

B Fig. 18 shows a detailed processing flow of a step of  
the <sup>departure</sup> ~~store-out~~ of the agent server of the delivery managing  
20 system of the second embodiment; and

Fig. 19 shows a functional construction diagram of a  
delivery managing system in accordance with a third  
embodiment of the present invention.

#### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS:

25 Hereinafter, embodiments according to the present



invention will be fully explained by referring to the attached drawings.

Fig. 1 shows a functional construction diagram of a first embodiment of the present invention. In the present embodiment, there are provided a client and two (2) kinds of servers, including a distribution server and an agent server, and the client and the each server of those two servers is connected with an information transmission network, such as a telephone cable. However, those two (2) kinds of servers are respectively located in a plurality number thereof. In Fig. 1, a reference numeral 111 indicates an assembly of functions on the distribution server, 112 an assembly of functions on the client, and 113 an assembly of functions on the agent server. Reference numerals (1) through (4) attached to arrows in Fig. 1 indicate rough sequential order of procedures. In the embodiment of the present invention, the delivery of commodities or goods from a distributor to a receiver or an addressee is carried out after establishing a contract between the seller and the purchaser, in case of an on-line shopping. However, taking a case of gifts into consideration, the receiver or addressee who is primarily to be a client is not necessarily to be the purchaser.

The commodities or goods on which the contract was made, in the embodiment, is called by three kinds of names, for

example, "a delivery goods", "a commissioned goods", and  
"a purchased goods". This is because of differences from  
various view points, such as from a view point of the  
distributor, a view point of the agent, and a view point  
5 of the purchaser. However, when calling by names of  
"delivery goods information", "commissioned goods  
information" and "purchased goods information", they  
differs <sup>from</sup> one another in the contents of the information to  
be used for management in respective standing points,  
10 therefore they mean differently. Such a "Contract code",  
which is a basic information for the delivery goods  
information 122 and the purchased goods information 124,  
and a "name of goods" is an information which was produced  
when the contract was made, therefore they are treated as  
15 if they have been already existing in the present embodiment.  
However, if the purchaser differs from the receiver, there  
is no purchased goods information for the client as the  
receiver or addressee. In the delivery goods information  
122, purchased goods information 124 and the commissioned  
20 goods information 125, the same "contract code" means that  
the same goods is treated. In the present embodiment, the  
"contract code" is expressed by four (4) digits of numeral  
number. However, in the sense of practical matter, since  
each "contract code" must be unique from a whole of the  
25 contracts, it may be in a form which includes a name of the

seller and so on therein.

Fig. 2 shows a hardware construction of each server.  
As an input apparatus, there are included a bar-code reader,  
an IC-card reader and so on other than a keyboard and a mouse.  
5 As an output apparatus, there are included a bar-code writer,  
an IC-card writer and so on other than a display and a  
printer.

Hereinafter, detail of the first embodiment will be  
explained with Fig. 1.

10 A step 101 is a step for notifying the personal  
information server of a list of a schedule for delivery by  
using the delivery information 121 and delivery goods  
information 122.

An example of the delivery information 121 is shown  
15 in Fig. 3 and an example of the delivery goods information  
122 in Fig. 4. In case that a column 411 of the delivery  
schedule is blanked, it means that there is not yet  
determined the delivery schedule and the agent. If it is  
filled with numerals, it means scheduled date and time, and  
20 if it is filled with letters, it means the agent to be used.  
In case that the column 412 of delivery condition is blanked,  
it means that the delivery goods is located in the  
distribution center. If it is filled with numerals, it  
means the date and time of completion of the delivery, and  
25 if it is filled with letters, it means that it is located

in the agent. In a column 413 of delivery goods arrival date, there is contained a scheduled date of arrival to the distribution center which is transmitted through the communication network, or a date when the goods is actually  
5 carried into the distribution center. Compilation of the delivery information is necessary as a function on the distribution server. However, in the present embodiment, the delivery information is treated as if it has been already existing, therefore no explanation will be given on the  
10 compilation function of the delivery information. The "contract code", "delivery address", "delivery goods" and "electronic address for delivery" of the delivery goods information are information which were produced when the seller and the purchaser made the contract, and they are  
15 noticed or inputted from the seller.

The detailed flow of the step 101 will be shown in Fig. 5.

In a step 501, the delivery goods information is obtained, in which a column of scheduled date for delivery  
20 is blanked. For example, such a delivery goods information 401 as shown in Fig. 4 is obtained.

In a step 502, a list of the scheduled date and time for delivery to the delivery address is obtained from the delivery addresses of the delivery goods information  
25 obtained and the delivery information 121. For example, the

delivery address of the delivery goods information 401 is  
"Utsukushigaoka" in Fig. 4, then the data 301 and 302 are  
obtained that indicate date and time of starting and  
completing of delivery service in the <sup>area</sup>~~area~~ "Utsukushigaoka"

5 as shown in Fig. 3.

In a step 503, the scheduled delivery date and time  
obtained in the step 502 and the contract code of the delivery  
goods are noticed to the electronic address for the delivery  
in the delivery goods information 122. For example, in the  
10 case of the delivery goods corresponding to the information  
401 in Fig. 4, the contract code "1001" and the date and  
time of starting/completing of delivery 301 and 302 in Fig.  
3 are noticed to the electronic address "tsukuda@aaa.bbb".  
In case that the purchaser is different from the receiver,  
15 not only the information of the contract code but also an  
information about the delivery goods is transmitted  
thereto.

A step 102 is a step in which the schedule of date and  
time for delivery is determined from the list of the  
20 scheduled date and time for delivery which is received from  
the distribution server, the schedule information 123 and  
the purchased goods information 124, and the determined  
schedule of date and time for delivery is <sup>fixed</sup>~~noticed~~ to the  
distribution server functioning as a source of <sup>fixing</sup>~~noticing~~  
25 thereof.

An example of the schedule information 123 and that of the purchased goods information 124 are shown in Figs. 6 and 7, respectively. A storage 703 in Fig. 7 indicates a place where the purchased goods is kept in it. In the present embodiment, the schedule information 123 is treated as if it has been already existing. Although the compiling function of the schedule information is necessary as an function on the client, it is out of the scope of the present invention. The "contract code" and the "purchased goods" of the purchased goods information are information which were produced when the seller and the purchaser made the contract, and "a standard for using an agency" and "an agent to be used" are the information which were set after the purchaser bought and made the contract.

The detailed flow of the step 102 mentioned above will be shown in Fig. 8.

A step 801 is a step of obtaining the earliest one of the scheduled date and time for delivery from a list of the scheduled date and time for delivery and the schedule information. For example, since delivery service with the starting/completing date and time for delivery 301 shown in Fig. 3 is impossible judging from the schedule information 601 shown in Fig. 6, and since there is no schedule during the period of 302, then the latter, i.e., the date and time of 302 in Fig. 3 is determined to be the scheduled date and

time for delivery (here, it is assumed that there is not yet existing the schedule information 602 in this time point). Actually, for determining as the scheduled time for delivery, it must be confirmed that the starting time of the scheduled  
5 delivery is later than the time of the completion time of the schedule just before as well as taking the time for moving into the consideration. Further, there is necessity of confirming the relationship to the schedule of just after it, in the same manner. If there is no schedule information,  
10 then it is treated as if there is not any schedule therein.

In a step 802, there is determined whether the goods should be delivered to the agent or to the delivery address. If the time interval between the day when it reaches at the distribution center and the available earliest scheduled  
15 date is greater than the days defined in the standard for using agency 701 shown in Fig. 7, it is decided to use the agent, and then a step 803 is executed. If it is not so, then a step 804 is executed. For example, in the case of the delivery goods information 401 shown in Fig. 4, since  
20 the standard for using an agency of the purchased goods information 705 of the contract code "1001" in Fig. 7 is "5 days", and since the interval between the date of arriving at distribution center 402 "960922(15)" and the earliest scheduled date for delivery "960925(15)" does not exceed  
25 that 5 days, it is decided to be delivered to the delivery

address. In case that "no use" is described in the column  
of the standard for using agency 701 in Fig. 7, the number  
of the days of the standard is considered limitless. As  
other standards for using agency other than that, there are  
5 cases of "impossible to deliver until  $\bigcirc$ th month,  $\times$ th day",  
"impossible to deliver after  $\Delta$  days have been passed from  
the date of purchasing contract", "absent when delivered  
once", and so on. Further, with the delivered goods on which  
the standard for using agency is not described, it can be  
10 considered that a default standard is used for it. With this,  
even when the purchaser of the goods is different from the  
receiver (a client), it is possible to use the agency.

In a step 803, the agent to be used is <sup>fixed</sup>noticed to the  
distribution server as the source of the list of the  
15 scheduled date and time for delivery. For example, in case  
of the goods of the contract code "1001" in Fig. 7, "agent  
X" in the column 701 is <sup>fixed</sup>noticed to the distribution server  
from the purchased goods information 705.

In an arbitrary agent, the commission is not  
20 necessarily available for all of goods. For example, it  
cannot deal with if the goods is larger than a certain size(s),  
or if there is no room for storing the goods to be  
commissioned. For that reason, a plurality of agents may  
be <sup>fixed</sup>noticed to the distribution server.

25 In a step 804, as well as the earliest one of the



scheduled date and time for delivery is notified<sup>flex</sup> to the distribution server as the noticing source of the list of the scheduled date and time for delivery, the scheduled date and time for delivery is registered into the schedule information 123 and the purchased goods information 124. For example, as an schedule information relating to the contract code "1001", "starting date and time: 960925(16), completing date and time: 960925(18), place: home, contents: receiving of delivery goods" (602 in Fig. 6) is registered into the schedule information 123, and "960925(16)" is registered into 704, as shown in Fig. 7.

In a step 805, the distribution server as the noticing source of the list of the scheduled date and time for delivery is registered into a storage 703 shown in Fig. 7 of the purchased goods information 124 as the storage at the present.

A step 103 shown in Fig. 1 is a step in which the scheduled date and time for delivery from the client, or the agent to be used is registered into the delivery goods information 122. For example, the scheduled date "960925(6)" 704 in Fig. 7, which is <sup>fixed</sup>~~noticed~~ in relation with the contract code "1001" is registered into a column 403 in Fig. 4. At this time, also an information of the delivery goods is <sup>fixed</sup>~~noticed~~ to the agent to be used, as the case may be. When receiving a response that the agent cannot deal

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with, then the notice is made to another agent. If all the agents is unavailable, it is <sup>fixed</sup>noticed to the client. Further, if a plurality of agents were <sup>fixed</sup>noticed, only the agent which is decided to be used is <sup>fixed</sup>noticed to the client.

5 In case that the delivery of delivery goods is conducted by the agent, the delivery goods itself is transferred from the distribution center to the agent. In this time, an information relating to the delivery goods is inputted on a paper or into a IC-card as a conveyable  
10 memory medium which can be attached therewith, by using the input apparatus including the bar-code reader, the IC-cord reader and so on. If the information of the delivery goods was already noticed to the agent server through the communication network, a confirmation of the purchased  
15 goods will be done by comparing the purchased goods information through the network and that inputted through the input apparatus.

In a step 104 in Fig. 1, the information of the delivery goods to be transferred to the agent is outputted as a line  
20 of letters or in a form of the bar-code on the paper, or outputted into the IC-card as the <sup>e</sup>conveyable medium. The information to be outputted includes the electronic address of the distributor.

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In the step 105 in Fig. 1, in order to receive the  
25 purchased goods which is completed to be delivered to the

agent, the information of the purchased goods is also outputted as a line of letters or in a form of the bar-code on the paper, or outputted into the IC-card as the conveyable medium.

5 A step 106 in Fig. 1 is a step, in which the purchased goods information inputted from the input apparatus is registered into the agent information 125 shown in Fig. 9, and a notice of <sup>information arrival</sup> ~~store-in~~ <sup>into the store</sup> of the goods is given to the distributor <sup>ion</sup> server and the client relating to it. For  
10 inputting, the bar-code or the card which are produced in the step 104 can be used. In this time, the delivery of the goods from the distributor to the agent is done.

The detailed processing flow of the step 106 will be given with reference to Fig. 10.

15 In a step 1001 in Fig. 10, the information inputted from the input apparatus is registered into the commissioned goods information 125. For example, in case that the information inputted from the input apparatus is "contract code: 2529, purchased goods: book, electronic address of  
20 distributor: info@a-butu.co, electronic address of purchaser: tsukuda@aaa.bbb" as shown in Fig. 9, the day when those information are inputted is treated as the day of <sup>arrival</sup> ~~store-in~~ so as to set the commissioned goods information  
901.

25 In a step 1002, the store-in of the delivery goods into

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the agent is <sup>Fied</sup>noticed to the distribution server. For  
example, in the case of the commissioned goods information  
901 shown in Fig. 9, the identification number "2529" and  
a flag of the <sup>arrival</sup>~~store-in~~ are <sup>Fied</sup>noticed to the address  
5 "info@a-butu.co" of the distributor.

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In a step 1003, the fact that the delivery goods <sup>has</sup>~~is~~  
<sup>arrival</sup>~~stored-in~~ to the agent is <sup>Fied</sup>noticed to the client, in the same  
7 manner as in the step 1002 mentioned in the above.

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A step 107 in Fig. 1 is a step, in which the date of  
10 <sup>departure of the goods</sup>~~store-out~~ is registered into the commissioned goods  
information 125 by using the contract code of the  
commissioned goods, which is inputted from the input  
apparatus, and the <sup>departure</sup>~~store-out~~ of the goods is <sup>Fied</sup>noticed to the  
distribution server and the client relating thereto. For  
15 inputting, the bar-code or the IC-card as the conveyable  
medium which are produced in the step 105 can be used. In  
this time, the delivery from the agent to the purchaser is  
done.

The detailed processing flow of the step 107 will be  
20 given with reference to Fig. 11.

A step 1101 is a step, in which it is decided or checked  
whether there is any agent coincident with that being  
identified in the contract code which is inputted from the  
input apparatus.

25 A step 1102 is a step, in which the date when the

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contract code is inputted from the input apparatus is registered into the column of the date of <sup>departure</sup>~~store-out~~ of the commissioned goods information relating to the contracting code. For example, in case that the contract code "2529" is inputted, a date is set in the column of the <sup>departure</sup>~~store-out~~ of the commissioned goods information 901, as is shown in Fig. 9.

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In a step 1103, the fact that the delivery goods is put out or <sup>departure</sup>~~store-out~~ from the storage of the agent is noticed to the distribution server from the agent. For example, in the case of the commissioned goods information 901 shown in Fig. 9, the identification number "2529" of the delivery goods and the <sup>departure</sup>~~store-out~~ flag is noticed to the address of the distributor, i.e., "info@a-butu.co".

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B  
In a step 1104, in the same manner as in the step 1103, the fact that the delivery goods is put out or <sup>has departed</sup>~~stored-out~~ from the storage of the agent is noticed to the client.

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A step 108 is a step, in which the delivery goods information is renewed on the basis of the information noticed from the agent server. In case that the information noticed from the agent server includes the contract code and the <sup>arrival</sup>~~store-in~~ flag, "agent" is registered into a column of delivery condition of the delivery goods information 122 which relates to the contract code. In the other case that the information noticed from the agent server includes the

B  
B

contract code and the <sup>departure</sup>~~store-out~~ flag, the date of the <sup>departure</sup>~~store-out~~ is registered into the column of the delivery condition of the delivery goods information which relates to the contract code. In more detail, in the step 108, in

5 case that the information of completion of delivery of the goods which is directly delivered to the address is inputted, the date and time of the delivery is also registered into the column of the "delivery condition" of the delivery goods information 122 shown in Fig. 4.

10 A step 109 is a step, in which the purchased goods information 124 is renewed on the basis of the information noticed from the agent server. In case that the information noticed from the agent server includes the contract code and the <sup>arrival</sup>~~store-in~~ flag, the name of the agent is registered

15 into a column of the "storage" of the purchased goods information 124 which relates to the contract code. In the other case that the information noticed from the agent server includes the contract code and the <sup>departure</sup>~~store-out~~ flag, as shown in Fig. 7, the date of the <sup>departure</sup>~~store-out~~ is registered into the

20 column of the "storage" of the delivery goods information 124 which relates to the contract code.

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A step 110 is a step for detecting an abnormal condition of the delivery goods. For example, it detects such the delivery goods located in the agent, of which the purchaser

25 does not come to receive it although several days have

already passed-by. In the present embodiment, the step 110 functions as one of those on the distribution server, however, the step 110 can be carried out on the client or the agent server other than that mentioned in the above.

5        Each of the distribution server 111, the client 112 and the agent server 113 comprises means for outputting the information treated with respective server. From the first embodiment, following effects can be obtained.

10        (1) Because the distributor can deliver the goods after confirming that the receiver or addressee stays at home, the possibility or chance to deliver it during her/his absence is reduced, thereby cutting back the delivery cost. (However, the delivery on absence cannot necessarily neglected to be zero because she/he sometimes goes out after  
15 making the confirmation.)

20        (2) The purchaser can receive the purchased goods at an earlier timing at her/his home, by keeping her/himself for a moment from going outside for shopping, etc., since the date and time for delivery is clear for her/him in advance.

25        (3) In case that the purchaser does not come back home in the delivery time of the distributor for a several days, she/he can receive the goods in an earlier timing by using the agent (However, in this case, an assumption that the agent is doing business later than the distributor is

necessary).

(4) On the goods which has been kept for a several days in the agent since the purchaser forgot to receive it, a reminder can be given from the distributor or the agent to the purchaser to receive it, thereby dissolving the forgetting to receive by the purchaser in an earlier timing. Further, the purchaser can check if she/he forgets to receive the goods by her/himself, thereby she/he may go to the distributor or the agent to receive it, or change the delivery address to her/his home address.

Fig. 12 shows a functional construction diagram of a second embodiment of the present invention. The portions and/or elements to which the same reference numerals as the first embodiment are attached indicate the same procedures and/or information of the first embodiment. In the present embodiment, only a portion different from the first embodiment will be explained. A reference numeral 1211 indicates an assembly of the functions of the distributor servers in the second embodiment, and 1213 an assembly of the functions of the agent servers.

In the first embodiment, it is assumed that a human lies between in the delivery of goods conducted through the agent. Namely, a person who stays in the agent at any time make the confirmation of receipt of the goods from the distribution center, and she/he deliver the goods to the



resident of the delivery address. In the second embodiment, for accomplishing an unmanned agent, the delivery locker is provided in the agent. The delivery locker is an assembly of boxes for conducting the delivery of goods, and is similar  
5 to a coin-operated locker or storage in the shape which is provided in a station, etc. In each of boxes, there is provided an electronic key, a box open/close device to open or release and close or lock the key thereof, and a box observation device for affirming an existence of the goods  
10 inside thereof.

Fig. 13 shows a hardware construction of the agent server in the second embodiment.

Hereinafter, the detailed explanation will be given with reference to Fig. 12.

15 In a step 1204, in addition to the information outputted in the step 104 mentioned above, a condition for storing the delivery goods in the delivery locker (i.e., size(s) or necessity of refrigeration of the goods, etc.) is outputted by using the delivery goods information 1222.

20 In Fig. 14, only the differences between the delivery goods information 122 already shown in Fig. 4 and the delivery goods information 1222, with respect to respective "contract code" are shown. As is apparent from this, the delivery goods information 1222 is constructed by further  
25 adding items or columns "size(s)" and "necessity of

refrigeration of the goods" to the items of the delivery goods information 122 shown in Fig. 4.

A step 1206 is a step, in which the information inputted from the input apparatus is registered into the commissioned goods information 125 and a locker information 127, thereby to notice the <sup>arrival</sup> ~~store-in~~ to the distribution server and the client relating thereto. For the purpose of inputting, the bar-code or the IC-card as the conveyable medium which are produced in the step 1204 can be used.

10 An example of the locker information 1227 is shown in Fig. 15. The locker information comprises, other than "Box Number", various conditions for using the respective boxes, including "size(s)", "able to refrigerate ?" and so on. Further, there is provided a "contract code" column for  
15 storing the contract code of the commissioned goods.

The detailed processing flow of the step 1206 will be given with reference to Fig. 16.

A step 1601 is a step for checking whether the electronic address of the distributor in the inputted  
20 information is in the list of the distributors or not, by using a distributor information 1226. This step is executed for prohibiting the distributors other than those registered from their impermissible use or tricking thereof. However, if such operation is not to be intended, there is  
25 no necessity of such the procedures mentioned above. An

example of the distributor information 1226 is shown in Fig. 17.

A step 1602 is a step for checking whether there is a locker which satisfies the condition or not, with respect to the delivery goods scheduled to be <sup>arrival</sup> ~~stored-in~~. For example, in the case of the delivery goods of the contract number "7281", the condition for <sup>arrival</sup> ~~store-in~~ is such as the reference numeral 1401 shows. Since there is a box satisfying the condition in accordance with the locker information 1501, a result of the checking is all right, i.e., OK.

A step 1603 is a step, in which an instruction to open or release the key is given to the open/close device of the box which is detected to satisfy the condition in the step 1602. After this, the distributor opens the door of the box, the key of which is opened to enter the delivery goods into it, and then closes the door thereof.

A step 1604 is the step of checking whether the door of the box, the key of which is opened, is closed or not. In case that the door is closed, a notice thereof is given from the box open/close device. A check is done depending on the presence the notice.

A step 1605 is a step, in which an instruction to close or lock the key is given to the open/close device of the box, the door of which is closed.

A step 1606 is a step for checking whether there is the goods inside of the key-locked box or not. For that checking, the box observation device such as an infrared light sensor, etc. is used. If the result of the checking is OK, the process of the store-out of the step 106 (already explained in the first embodiment) is executed.

A step 1207 is a step, in which the date of the store-out is registered into the commissioned goods information 125 and the <sup>departure</sup>~~store-out~~ is noticed to the distributor server and the client relating thereto. For the purpose of inputting, also the bar-code and/or the IC-card which are produced in the step 105 can be used.

The detailed processing flow of a step 1207 will be given with reference to Fig. 18.

A step 1801 is a step for checking whether the commissioned goods relating to the inputted contract code is stored in the locker or not. For example, as shown in Fig. 15, in case that the inputted contract code is "4293", since it coincides with contract code of the locker information 1502, the result of the checking is to be OK.

A step 1802 is a step, in which an instruction to open or release the key is given to the open/close device of the box in which the commissioned goods relating to the contract code is stored. For example, in case that the inputted contract code is "4293", the instruction of key-opening is

given to the locker open/close device having the box number  
"3" in the locker information 1502, as shown in Fig. 15.

After that, the purchaser opens the door of the box  
whose key is released to take out the purchased goods, and  
5 then closed the door. Further, steps 1604, 1605 and 1606  
are executed. In case that the result of the checking in  
the step 1606 is no good, i.e., NG, then, a step 1803 is  
executed.

The step 1803 is a step, in which the "contract code"  
10 column of the locker information of the locker is deleted,  
from which locker the purchased goods is taken out. When  
the door is closed, a notice is given from the box open/close  
device. A checking is done depending on the presence of this  
notice.

15 In the second embodiment mentioned above, the  
distributor can store the delivery goods in the delivery  
locker and the purchaser can take out from that delivery  
locker. Thereby, dehumanization of the agent can be  
realized, and there is no time limit for the purchaser to  
20 receive it through the agent. Therefore, it is possible for  
the purchaser to receive the goods in an earlier timing.

Fig. 19 shows a functional construction diagram of a  
third embodiment of the present invention. The portions  
and/or elements to which the same reference numerals as the  
25 first embodiment are attached indicate the same procedures

and/or information of the first embodiment. A reference numeral 1911 indicates an assembly of the functions of the distributor servers in the third embodiment, and 113 an assembly of the functions of the agent servers. In the  
5 present embodiment, only a portion different from the first embodiment is explained.

In the first embodiment, the compiling function of the delivery information 121, the delivery goods information 122, and the schedule information 123 are treated as if they  
10 are out of the scope of the present invention, therefore, an influence to other servers due to deletion of those information is not taken into consideration. In the present embodiment, however, a total managing system for delivery goods will be explained, in which the influence due to the  
15 deletion of the delivery information and the schedule information is also taken into consideration.

The detailed explanation of the third embodiment will be given by referring to Fig. 19.

A step 1901 is a step for compiling the delivery  
20 information. The compile of the delivery information can be done at an arbitrary time point. If the delivery information is deleted, a step 1902 is called up.

The step 1902 is a step in which the deletion of the scheduled date and time of delivery is noticed to the client  
25 at the address for the delivery relating to the deleted

delivery information. For example, if the delivery information 301 shown in Fig. 3 is deleted, the delivery goods information 404 in Fig. 4 corresponding to the area name "Utsukushigaoka" and the delivery starting time  
5 "960925(16)" is detected, and the deletion of the scheduled date and time for delivery of the delivery goods of the contract code "1001" in Fig. 4 is noticed to the electronic address "yamada@aaa.ccc" of the delivery address of the client.

10 After the notice of the deletion in the step 1902, the step 101 is executed on the basis of the delivery goods information which is deleted.

In a step 1903, receiving the notice of deletion of the scheduled date and time for delivery from the client,  
15 the column of the scheduled date for delivery corresponding to the delivery goods information is made blank. For example, when receiving the notice of deletion of delivery of the contract code "1205", the column of the scheduled date for delivery of the delivery goods information 404 is  
20 blanked, as shown in Fig. 4.

After the execution of the step 1903, the step 101 is executed with respect to the delivery goods information whose column of the scheduled date for delivery is blanked.

A step 1904 is a step in which the schedule information  
25 is compiled. The compiling of the schedule information can

be done at an arbitrary time point. In case that the schedule information relating to receipt of the delivery goods is deleted, a step 1905 is called up.

In the step 1905, the column of "schedule" for delivery  
5 of the purchased goods information relating to the deleted  
schedule of receipt of the delivery goods is blanked, and  
the deletion of the scheduled date and time for delivery  
is noticed to the related distribution server. For example,  
in case that the schedule 602 in Fig. 6 is deleted, the column  
10 of the scheduled date of the purchased goods information  
705 in Fig. 7, which has the scheduled date for delivery  
coincident with the starting date and time of the schedule  
602, is blanked, and the deletion of the scheduled date and  
time of the contract code "1001" is noticed to "Distributor  
15 A".

In a step 1906, receiving the notice of deletion of  
the scheduled date and time for delivery from the  
distribution server, the column of the scheduled date and  
time of the corresponding purchased goods information is  
20 blanked as well as the related schedule is deleted. For  
example, when receiving the notice of deletion of delivery  
of the contract code "1001", the scheduled date "960925(16)"  
for delivery 704 in Fig. 7 is blanked, and the schedule  
information 602 which has the same date and time as 704 in  
25 the column of the starting date and time is deleted.



In a step 1907, receiving the notice from the client in the same manner as in the step 103 mentioned in the above, it is registered into the delivery goods information. However, sometimes the delivery information may be deleted  
5 by the step 1901 mentioned above during the execution of the steps 101 and 102. Therefore, it is registered into the delivery goods information after confirming the existence of the scheduled date and time in the delivery information.

In accordance with the present embodiment, when the  
10 purchaser deletes her/his schedule to receive the goods, it is automatically noticed to the distributor and a list of available date and time for delivery is transmitted from the distributor again. Therefore, the purchaser should not always be bound to the schedule for receiving the goods,  
15 and she/he can re-adjust the schedule easily. Further, if the distributor deletes the schedule for delivery, it is automatically noticed to the purchaser, and a list of available date and time for delivery is transmitted from the distributor again for the purchaser to ensure the  
20 schedule to receive it. Thereby, the distributor can reduce the influence on the purchaser as small as possible.

It is also possible to store the program for executing the procedures shown in Figs. 1, 12 and 19 into a portable storage medium, such as a floppy disk or an optical disk,  
25 so as to be read into a main memory for execution thereof

in a personal computer system, etc.

With the delivery managing system of the present invention fully explained in the above has following effects:

5           (1) Because the distributor can distribute the delivery goods after confirming that the stay of the receiver or addressee at home, therefore, the possibility or chance of delivery in absence of the receiver or addressee is reduced, thereby reducing the cost for delivery. (However, 10 the delivery during absence of the resident cannot necessarily neglected to be zero because she/he sometimes goes out after making confirmation.)

          (2) The purchaser can receive the purchased goods at an earlier timing at her/his home, by keeping her/himself 15 for a moment from going outside for shopping, etc., since the date and time for delivery is clear for her/him in advance.

          (3) In case that the purchaser does not come back home in the delivery time of the distributor for a several days, 20 she/he can receive the goods in an earlier timing by using the agent (However, in this case the assumption is necessary that the agent is doing business later than the distributor. In case that the delivery locker is provided in the agent, since the dehumanization of the agent can be achieved, 25 realization of the above assumption becomes easier.).

(4) On the goods which has been kept for a several days in the agent since the purchaser forgot to receive it, a reminder can be given from the distributor or the agent to the purchaser to receive it, thereby dissolving the  
5 forgetting to receive by the purchaser in an earlier timing. Further, the purchaser can check if she/he forgets to receive the goods by her/himself, thereby she/he may go to the distributor or the agent to receive or change the delivery address to her/his home address.

10 (5) When the purchaser deletes her/his schedule to receive the goods, it is automatically noticed to the distributor and a list of available date and time for delivery is transmitted from the distributor again. Therefore, the purchaser should not be always bound to the  
15 schedule for receiving the goods, and she/he can re-adjust the schedule easily.

(6) If the distributor deletes the schedule for delivery, it is automatically noticed to the purchaser, and a list of available date and time for delivery is transmitted  
20 from the distributor again, for the purchaser to ensure the schedule to receive. Thereby, the distributor can reduce an influence on the purchaser as small as possible.